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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000211

SIPDIS

BERLIN: PLEASE PASS TO AMB. MAUREEN QUINN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/20/2014

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [IT](#) [AFGHANISTAN](#)

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: PRT/FSB -- ITALY URGENTLY SEEKING ANSWERS

REF: A) ROME 178 B) STATE 2743 C) 04 ROME 3849 D) 04 ROME 2913 E) 04 ROME 2122

Classified By: CHARGE' D'AFFAIRES EMIL SKODON FOR REASONS 1.4(b & d)

11. (U) This is an action cable. See Paragraphs 2 and 5.

12. (C) Summary. Italy is firm in its commitment and poised to deploy a PRT and FSB to Herat before Afghan parliamentary elections (Reftel A). However, after receiving recent U.S. demarches on Stage II requirements, the Italians are having doubts about whether the U.S. will support their deployment plan. During Ambassador Quinn's January 25 visit to Rome, the Italians will press for specific answers to three questions on which -- in spite of explanations given by the Embassy and US NATO -- Italian and U.S. views seem to differ. We need either to reassure the Italians that we support their plan or else immediately begin working with them to modify their plan so that we can support it. ACTION REQUEST: Post requests guidance to answer questions posed in Paragraph 5 no later than Amb. Quinn's January 25 meetings in Rome. End Summary.

13. (C) Over the past two weeks, the uncertainty expressed by Italian military and MFA officials has grown. On January 19, Italian CHOD Adm. Giampaolo di Paola telephoned CJCS to seek clarification on U.S. positions regarding readiness for the Italian deployment, transfer of the Herat PRT to ISAF, and support for the Italian FSB. On January 20, working-level officers from the Italian Defense General Staff (IDGS) stressed to Polmil Counselor and DATT that Italy's prestige and credibility will be damaged if the U.S. delays transfer of the Herat PRT to Italian command beyond June 2005 (or before Afghan parliamentary elections). According to the officers, it is vital that Italy visibly take on the responsibilities to which it has committed itself. In responding to U.S. requests to take on a PRT, Italy has assumed that, once it showed up in sufficient force, it would take command. The Italians feel that the key condition for transferring command should be Italian readiness and not the readiness of others in other provinces.

14. (C) Italy is looking forward to the January 25 visit of Coordinator for Afghanistan Maureen Quinn as an opportunity to reconfirm bilateral understanding about the terms and schedule of Italy's deployment. Amb. Quinn can expect pointed questions on the three areas of particular concern mentioned in Reftel A, Paragraph 12, and further defined in the following paragraph.

15. (C) ACTION REQUEST: Post requests that the Department provide the Embassy and Amb. Quinn with answers to the following questions prior to Amb. Quinn's January 25 visit to Rome.

Deployment Schedule

Italy has made its plans on the assumption that Italy should deploy its PRT/FSB personnel prior to Afghan parliamentary elections (now expected in early or mid-summer) and that ISAF would consequently expand to at least Herat due to the Italian ISAF presence. To meet this requirement, the deployment schedule outlined in Reftel A is now practically underway. QUESTIONS: Does the U.S. still support the Italian deployment schedule? If the U.S. has problems with it, we need to tell Italy exactly how many personnel the U.S. can accommodate in Herat and on what timeline for the PRT and, if possible, for the FSB.

Transfer of Herat PRT to Italian Command under ISAF

We have repeatedly told the Italians that conditions on the ground, not a pre-set timetable, will determine the transfer of Herat PRT to Italian command. We have also told them repeatedly that, if Stage II requirements are not filled, the U.S. may withdraw its offer to transfer the Herat and Farah PRTs to ISAF command (Reftels A and B). But the Italians have reacted unhappily to these points, and have cited recent reports from SACEUR (NFI) indicating that conditions at Herat are fair and improving. Italy continues to underline its strong preference that the PRT should transition from OEF to

Italian command under ISAF once the Italian troops have arrived (and prior to parliamentary elections). Italy does not understand what additional changes on the ground need to occur before its military can take command. QUESTION: The Italians will seek U.S. confirmation that the Herat PRT's transfer to Italian command under ISAF will occur by June 12005. Is transfer to Italian command indeed conditional on other factors, as suggested in Reftel B? If so, Ambassador Quinn should be prepared to define such factors clearly, in order to give the Italians a chance to evaluate whether a summer transfer of command is achievable.

Helicopters for Italian FSB

Italy has agreed to provide helicopter support. However, U.S. Joint Staff has made it clear that Phase II FSB resources must be generated through SHAPE. QUESTIONS: Is there a realistic prospect that SHAPE can get the helicopters needed to support the Italian FSB from April through June? If SHAPE cannot, what should Italy do before its helicopters are available? Can OEF helicopters be available if needed for these months for the 100-plus Italians in the FSB? If not, should Italy postpone the FSB deployment due to start in April until its helicopters arrive in theater?

16. (C) Comment. Differences between the Italian and U.S. positions on these questions have caused the Italians to doubt whether their deployment plan will work. If we want Italy to modify its deployment schedule, Italy must know this quickly. We should bear in mind that, in 2004, switches in U.S. signals caused Italy to cancel plans for PRT deployments (first to Ghazni and later to Herat). If Italy is forced to re-write well-advanced plans drawn up at NATO request, it may weaken the strong Italian commitment to the success of OEF and ISAF. End Comment.

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